**School Self-Evaluation Report 2013/’14**

1. **Introduction**

School self evaluation is seen as an important area to inform school development planning in our school. For many years The Board of Management, staff, parents and pupils have worked together to improve the school infrastructure, resources, level of care, teaching and learning in our school. Evaluation of this work was mainly external in the form of occasional inspections by the inspectorate of the DES. Such external evaluation while valuable can only ever provide a snapshot of school work at a particular time.

The DES decision to formalise SSE as part of the evaluation structure for primary schools is therefore welcomed by our school. Through the ongoing process of SSE The Board of Management and staff hope that they will be enabled to focus on areas of concern to our school, particularly in teaching and learning, rather than being driven by top down initiatives which may or may not be relevant to our school. As recognised by the Minister such an approach will build our school’s capacity to improve.

This work continues and the school development plan drawn up after the school’s last WSE in 2011 and most recently updated in 2014 outlines the priority areas that our school is focused on. This school self-evaluation report for 2013/’14 concentrates on numeracy but also evaluates the school’s legislative and regulatory compliance as per the School Self-Evaluation Guidelines checklist.

1. **The focus of the evaluation**

A school self-evaluation of teaching and learning in numeracy was undertaken in the school during the 2013/’14 school year. During the evaluation teaching and learning in numeracy across the whole school was evaluated.

1. **School Context**

* This is a mixed, vertical primary school located on the edge of Portlaoise with a rural/urban intake.
* At the time of the report there are 224 pupils.
* The school is single stream junior infants to sixth – eight classes, eight class teachers, 3 SET, an administrative principal, four SNAs and part-time ancillary staff.
* The school has an assessment policy which includes the standardised testing of maths from 1st to 6th annually.

1. **Findings**

* The WSE report of 2011 recommended that greater attention be given to the teaching of subject-specific language in maths and that there should be an increased emphasis on problem solving.
* Standardised testing for the previous two years 2012/’13 and 2013/’14 show that pupils are performing significantly above the national norms with 39% in both years scoring above the 50th percentile rank and 36%/40% respectively scoring above the 85th percentile rank or above compared with 16% nationally. The scores also indicate that far fewer pupils are scoring under the 16th percentile rank 2% as against 14% nationally, and under the 50th percentile 22% as against 34% nationally.
* In a survey of pupils from 2nd to 5th class across all ability levels 100% of pupils said they liked maths.
* The same pupil survey indicated that pupils also appreciated the importance of maths.
* The majority of pupils surveyed indicated that mathematical language is taught in their classes. Suggestions from pupils on how to improve this area included word walls, maths language sheets or journals and continued repetition of language and meaning by teachers.
* The most challenging areas for pupils as expressed in the survey were subtraction, long division, long multiplication, division of decimals and problem solving.
* Pupils indicated that they would like more help in the areas of time, tables, problem solving, long division and multiplication as well as fractions.
* A parental survey on maths was returned by 88 families representing 63% of the total number.
* 87% of parents feel that their child has a positive attitude to maths.
* The main areas of difficulty for pupils noted by parents are 1)Fractions 27%, 2)Problem solving 23%, 3)Measurement 18% and 4)Number 16%. 24% of parents indicated their children had no difficulties while 10% did not know what their children’s difficulties were.
* 98% of parents indicated that they assist their children when they have difficulties. The main method of assistance was talking the child through 80%, parents also showed an example 56% or simplified the work 54%.
* 10% of parents indicated mathematical language was a difficulty for their pupils while 3% indicated that it posed a difficulty for themselves.
* All teachers believe that there is a strong emphasis on maths in the school.
* Problem solving and improved understanding and use of mathematical language were identified as the main areas of concern for teachers however teachers would like to have hard data to back up this view point and to know in which areas of maths their teaching is succeeding and which areas need greater attention.

1. **Progress made on previously identified targets.**

Not applicable for year one.

1. **Summary of school self-evaluation findings**

* Our school has strengths in the following areas:
  + Pupils are performing above the national norms in standardised testing which indicates good pupil learning in the area of maths.
  + Pupils enjoy maths and view it as an important subject.
  + The majority of parents 87% supported their children’s positive view of maths.
  + There is strong parental support for pupils when they experience difficulties with 98% indicating they have assisted their child.
  + The majority of parents were aware of the areas in which their children needed assistance and indicated a number of different methods they use in helping their children.
  + Teachers are positive about the teaching of maths and would like to ensure that the school continues to succeed in this area. In this regard they wish to improve their knowledge of areas of maths causing difficulties for pupils.
* The following areas are prioritised for improvement:
  + Greater teacher knowledge of areas of difficulty for pupils.
  + A greater emphasis on the teaching of mathematical language throughout the school.
  + A greater emphasis on problem solving

1. **The following legislative and regulatory requirements need to be addressed.**

* The school needs as per circular 56/2011 to make the NCCA Explanatory leaflet on standardised testing available to parents. This will be done by placing this information on the school website.
* The school needs to ensure that school policies are readily available this will be achieved by placing policies on the school website.